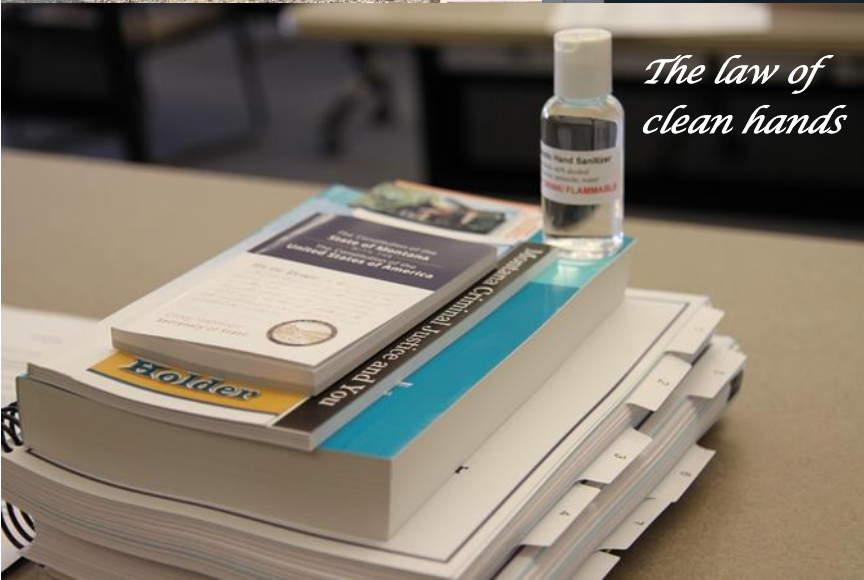




MONTANA LAW ENFORCEMENT ACADEMY

2020 Annual Report



From the Administrator

Since 1959, the Montana Law Enforcement Academy has provided entry level and advanced training to Montana's state, county, city, and tribal law enforcement agencies. Public perception, the need for transparency, jail and prison overcrowding, mental health and substance abuse addictions, human trafficking, staffing shortages and simple economics are challenging public safety agencies across the country and Montana. New business practices bring new training needs.

As with every year, 2020 brought new challenges and opportunities to the Academy as we continued providing exceptional education to public safety personnel in our basic and professional development programs. We continue in our mission to provide an atmosphere where all law enforcement and public safety professionals can participate in programs enhancing their knowledge, honing their skills, and developing the foundation of their ability to meet the ever-changing needs of the communities they serve.



If you have questions, please feel free to call me at 406-444-9957 or email: gstinar@mt.gov

Sincerely,

Glen Stinar, *Administrator*

Montana Law Enforcement Academy

Legal Authority

Montana Code Annotated § 44-10-102 establishes a Montana Law Enforcement Academy “to provide Montana law enforcement officers and other qualified individuals with a means of securing training in the field of law enforcement.”

In addition, Mont. Code Ann. § 44-10-202 directs the Department of Justice to produce an annual report on the Academy's activities and provide a copy to the Governor, Attorney General, and Secretary of State.

Our Mission

The mission of the Montana Department of Justice Law Enforcement Academy is to serve law enforcement agencies and the communities they represent by providing a positive atmosphere where relevant and realistic training for new and veteran public safety professionals occurs.

Core Values

The core values of the Academy are *integrity, duty, loyalty*, and *honesty*.

Areas of Focus in Support of Our Mission Statement

We believe in order to achieve mission success four key areas of focus must be achieved by all Academy staff and adjunct instructors:

- 1 – *Fostering* an environment where effective communicating is trained, modeled and re-enforced.
- 2 – *Encouraging* students to think ethically in determining what to do.
- 3 – *Enforcing* strict training standards that ultimately lead to appropriate decision making.
- 4 – *Supporting* each other as professionals with dignity, respect, and a shared commitment to success.



Poster displayed in all offices to remind staff of the areas of focus.

Law Enforcement Academy Staff and Facilities

In 1997, the Academy moved from Bozeman to the 20-acre Mountain View School in the north Helena valley. The Academy owns and leases two additional agricultural tracts totaling 184 acres. The campus has 18 buildings and an overall footprint of 104,817 square feet. These structures include offices, classrooms, conference rooms, dormitory rooms, gymnasium, maintenance shop, storage, and a cafeteria. Of those, five were built in the 1920's, four in the 1960's and one in 2010. Four dormitory style buildings provide a 136-bed residential capacity.

Other major structures include two wells, one water tower with a 66,000-gallon capacity, and a wastewater treatment facility with three lagoons and a 2.8-million-gallon capacity.



US, Montana, and MLEA flags with gymnasium in background.

In 2017, the 65th Legislative Session approved \$6.5 million dollars for dormitory and cafeteria remodel projects as outlined in a master plan developed by State Architecture and Engineering staff. During that same session, and in response to chronic annual gaps from the Academy's criminal conviction surcharge funding stream, a portion of the Temporary Registration Permit (TRP) fee collected by Department of Justice (DOJ) Motor Vehicle Division at the time of purchase of certain vehicles as outlined in MCA 61-3-224 was re-directed to the Academy's special revenue account. The new TRP fee collections replaced the old criminal conviction surcharge funding stream and has substantially improved revenue flow to Academy operations over the last three years. As a result, long overdue improvements to training and infrastructure were completed in 2020.

The Academy has 14 full-time equivalents (FTEs):

- ❖ 1 Administrator
- ❖ 1 Assistant Attorney General
- ❖ 7 Training and Development Specialists
- ❖ 1 Operations Manager
- ❖ 2 Maintenance Workers
- ❖ 1 Custodian
- ❖ 1 Administrative Assistant



Training Officers (in brown overalls) debrief a student during traffic stop training.

Additional training staff:

- ❖ 1 Dept. of Corrections Training and Development Specialist assigned to the Academy
- ❖ 1 Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) grant funded Training and Development Specialist

In 2020 the Academy grew by two trainers. One was a Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) trainer funded through a federal grant who specializes in delivering curriculum relevant to sexual assault investigations for public safety officers and agencies in Montana. The other was a partnership between DOJ and the Department of Corrections (DOC) which brought a DOC trainer to the Academy to assist with delivering basic course curriculum. The position is funded by the DOC and works full time at the Academy.



In addition to acting as coaches, mentors, evaluators and trainers for students, training staff are also asked to perform other duties that include testifying at coroner's inquests, sitting on state boards, developing model policies, and conducting training for agencies statewide.

Training Officer Mike McCarthy testifies at a coroner's inquest in Billings.

Academy Highlights

1. – In 2020, the biggest story line for the Academy, as well as the rest of the world, was navigating COVID-19. MLEA staff drafted a plan with DOJ leadership approval which allowed for limited in-person training to continue on campus for law enforcement and corrections /detention basic courses. For the April law enforcement basic course, students were confined to campus

Plaque created by graduates of the June law enforcement officer basic course.



for much of the first four weeks; training was conducted over two of those weekends. Student and staff health screenings were routinely conducted, meals were pre-ordered and served in Styrofoam containers. Additionally, strict mask wearing requirements, sanitizing schedules and social distancing protocols were enforced. Training schedules were modified to limit student contact, and portions of the curriculum were delivered on-line so students could attend remotely. MLEA training staff had never delivered basic course curriculum this way but collaborated exceptionally well to make it happen in such a short period of time. By the end of the year, MLEA

staff had conducted thirteen basic courses on and off campus; ten had no COVID-19 positive exposure test results reported.

Dorm building hallway before and after remodel.

2. – 2020 brought to an end the two - year \$9.2-million-dollar renovation project that represented three phases of the State Architecture and Engineering's Master Plan. Three dorm buildings constructed between 1920 and 1926 received major upgrades to heating, cooling, and ventilation systems. Laundry facilities, bathroom upgrades, and kitchenettes were added to enhance the quality of



life for students who spend as long as six months at the Academy. Seating capacity in the cafeteria, originally built in 1967, increased from 75 to 135. A conference room, bathrooms, storage, an outdoor seating area and upgraded kitchen equipment were added, as well as a new HVAC system. Additionally, office space was added to the Ohs Education Center to consolidate training staff. Motion - activated lighting and efficient heating and cooling systems are expected to reduce MLEA's overall operational costs. The next phase of the plan includes an indoor training facility that will allow staff and students to conduct training year-round in a climate-controlled environment.

Montana Law Enforcement Academy Master Plan

"...When MLEA took over the campus the buildings were in very poor and deteriorating condition due to vacancy and lack of maintenance. The (DOJ), and past and current administration of MLEA, have been diligent in their continuing efforts to improve and upgrade not only the educational programs, but also the buildings and campus in order to provide a more conducive learning environment for law enforcement cadets."

---Excerpt from the MLEA Master Plan by State Architecture and Engineering (2016)





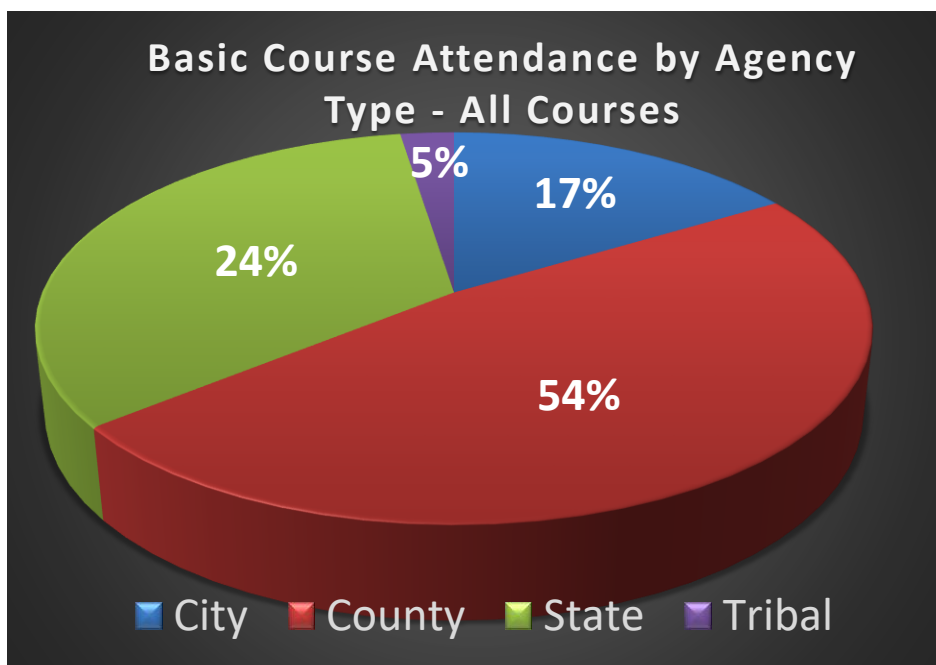
Training Officer Natale Adorni views Montana's Silent Witness exhibit.

3. – In observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month each October, the Academy once again hosted the Montana Silent Witness exhibit. The exhibit features over 100 red silhouettes, each memorializing a victim. Established in 1999, the Montana Silent Witness Initiative's goal is to promote successful community-based domestic violence reduction efforts. Students comment that this exhibit, which includes the names of victims, brings to life the importance of law enforcement's work.

4. – The Academy hosted leaders from Montana's public safety community to update model policies in response to federal police reform efforts. The U.S. Department of Justice Standards for Certification on Safe Policing for Safe Communities required public safety agencies who receive federal funding to certify that they have adopted policies meeting certain use of force, search and seizure, hiring, employee wellness and community engagement guidelines. As a result of this groups efforts, model policies that meet all new federal requirements were created and sent to all public safety agencies statewide. They were also made available through the Academy's web page.

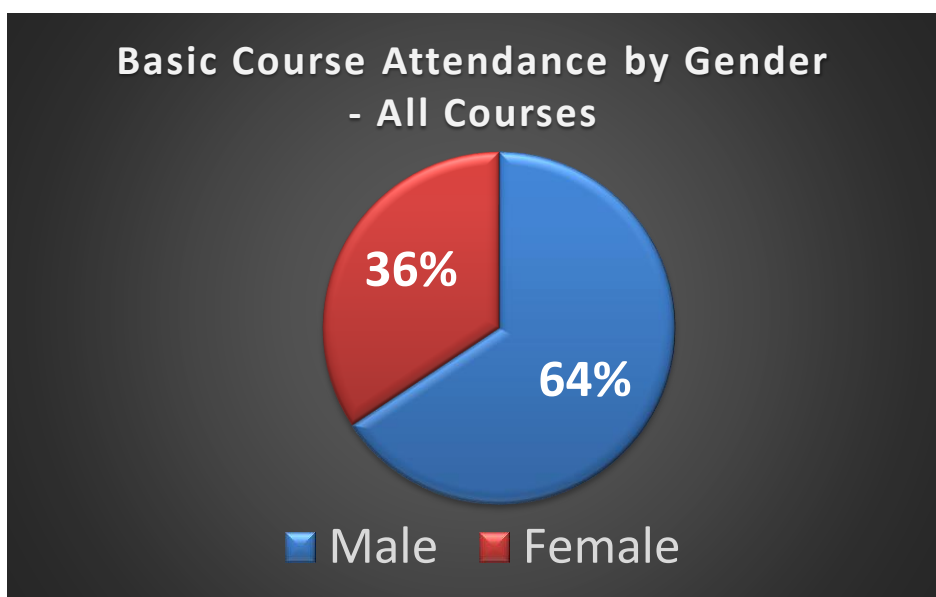
Academy Basic Programs in 2020

By law, peace officers are required to attend a Montana Public Safety Officers Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) approved basic course within 12 months of their date of hire. MLEA is the only P.O.S.T. certified location for basic courses in the state and responsible for providing education and training to entry-level law enforcement and public safety officers throughout Montana. The Academy accomplishes this by conducting a number of different basic courses. The law enforcement and public safety officers originate from agencies across Montana, including state, county, city and tribal organizations. The three basic programs Academy staff are responsible for are the ***Law Enforcement Officer Basic Course***, ***Corrections /Detention Officer Basic Course*** and the ***Public Safety Communicators Course***. The Montana Department of Corrections also conducts a 10-week residential ***Adult Probation and Parole Basic Course*** at MLEA each year. In 2020, COVID-19 suspended the Probation & Parole Basic Course.



The **Law Enforcement Officer Basic Course** is the longest residential course at 12 weeks in length. Traditionally, the Academy conducts three of these courses each year. In 2020, the Academy conducted three courses, although due to COVID-19, no two were identical. This was challenging for Academy staff, but they rose to the occasion. Total student count for this course in 2020 was 179.

The Academy conducts three **Public Safety Communicator Basic Courses** per year. This course is designed for dispatchers who work in 911 centers throughout the state. The curriculum increased from one to two weeks in length in 2017 and was the first major overhaul of the course since its inception in 1997. The most significant improvement was the addition of a 24-hour Emergency Medical Dispatching (EMD) component. Three courses were conducted in 2020 for 67 students. Due to limited COVID-19 training capacity on campus, all three of these



courses were conducted at a training facility off site. Coordinating a course off site while complying with all COVID-19 safety protocols proved challenging for Academy staff, but they performed exceptionally well.

At four weeks in length, the **Corrections/Detention Officer Basic Course** is the second - longest residential course at the Academy. Of all the programs MLEA conducts, this basic course is of the highest demand. Seven courses were conducted in 2020, training 186 personnel. Smaller class sizes proved much more effective in managing the risks of COVID-19 although it created a significant amount of work for Academy staff. Training over weekends, managing adjunct instructors who preferred to deliver training remotely, and continuing to deliver training via Zoom to students who were isolating due to a possible COVID-19 exposure added to the workload. Thanks to the staff's efforts, all students graduated as scheduled.

Who Attended Basic Programs in 2020?

- The average age of a Law Enforcement Officer Basic Course student was 29 years; with 30% reported having some military service; and 77% reported having either some college or a degree.
- The average age of a Corrections/Detention Officer Basic Course student was 29 years; with 5% reported having some military service; and 58% reported having either some college or a degree.
- The average age of a Public Safety Communicator (dispatcher) Basic Course student was 34 years; with 7% reported having some military service; and 67% reported having either some college or a degree.

In 2020, 442 individuals attended MLEA's 13 basic courses.

Basic Course Title	Male	Female	City	County	State	Tribal Federal	Other
Correction/Detention Officer Basic (7)	130	66	0	131	65	0	6
Law Enforcement Officer Basic (3)	148	31	67	62	36	14	0
Public Safety Communicator Basic (3)	7	60	8	48	6	5	1
TOTALS	285	157	75	241	107	19	7

As previously mentioned, the **Law Enforcement**, **Corrections/Detention**, and **Public Safety Communicator** courses are the Academy's three primary entry - level basic certification programs required by Montana law. For the previous four years, Academy staff trained an average of 447 students per year over all three basic programs. Remarkably, with the dangers and training constraints posed by COVID-19, staff trained 442 students in 2020. A true testament to their abilities, this accomplishment is in keeping with the DOJ's commitment to Montana's public safety community.



MLEA gymnasium floor.

Academy Professional Programs

The Academy also provides several professional programs for existing law enforcement and public safety professionals. Last year, 23 professional programs ranging from 8 - 160 hours in length were scheduled. Twelve programs were conducted for a total of 424 hours of instruction. In 2020, 204 people attended an Academy professional development program; topics included first line supervisor, defensive tactics instructor, firearms instructor, ground tactics, instructor development, legal equivalency, and standard field sobriety testing certification. Eleven courses were cancelled due to COVID-19. In a normal training year, the Academy conducts 20 - 25 professional programs totaling 950 hours for 450 – 500 students. Instruction occurs either on campus or at locations across the state when requested by the hosting agency.

Academy training officers are respected for their technical expertise and frequently asked to provide training across the state. Staff conducted seven regional trainings and two Zoom meeting presentations for 381 participants. Topics included human trafficking, domestic violence, orders of protection, drug endangered children, and search and seizure. The audiences included the Montana Association of Legal Assistants, the Montana Association of Narcotics Officers, the 8th Judicial Drug Court, Front Range CASA, the County Attorney's Association, and the Montana Bureau of Crime Control's Annual Crime Prevention Conference (virtual). These presentations were conducted at no cost to the requesting agencies.

Tribal Representation

Registration for tribal students in Academy basic and professional programs is the same as for non-tribal agencies. Tribal law enforcement agencies can choose to send their new employees to either the BIA Academy in Artesia, NM, or the MLEA. Nineteen students from Montana's seven reservations comprised 5% of the total student count for basic programs in 2020.



*Officer's Tristan Redhorn and Christian Upham with
Blackfeet Law Enforcement.*

Future Plans and Initiatives

1.- Increase on-line learning components for MLEA basic programs. Law enforcement academies around the country are moving to a blend of on-line training and traditional classroom learning. In 2019, the MLEA developed 24 hours of on-line training as part of its updated law enforcement officer basic course curriculum that was launched in January 2020. That fall, corrections/detention officer basic course cadre began the arduous task of converting 80 hours of their basic course to a Moodle on-line delivery platform representing 28 individual courses and half of the overall length of the course. When launched in 2021, students will register for and complete the on-line half of the course before coming for the two-week resident phase. Costs to agencies and time spent away from work will be reduced by half and the Academy will be able to train more students per year.

2.- Develop plans to fund and execute remaining phases of the Architecture & Engineering Master Plan and make infrastructure repairs not identified in the plan. In December, three phases of MLEA's Master Plan, prepared by the Department of Administration's Architecture & Engineering Division in 2016, were completed. Developing a thoughtful plan to fund remaining phases will ensure success of the overall master plan as written. The Academy's special revenue account will be the primary funding source for future projects.



Phase 3 of the master plan includes an indoor scenario training facility.

Additionally, infrastructure repairs not specifically identified in the plan also need attention. Examples include deteriorating light poles, bridges, and roads on campus. A major project scheduled for summer 2021 will be servicing the MLEA's aging 66,000-gallon water tower.

3. - Conduct staffing capabilities assessment to better meet future training needs. MLEA training and support staffing levels are lower today than they were ten years ago. Reservations and associated wait lists continue to be a topic of conversation as the MLEA balances the delivery of basic and professional programs with current training and support staffing levels. Prior to COVID-19 the interim fix had been to increase law enforcement and corrections/detention basic course class sizes to accommodate agency needs and requirements for peace officers to complete a basic course within one year of their date of hire. This approach, while increasing the number of students who can be trained, conflicts with the adult learning principal that small group instruction leads to better learning outcomes. It is also mentally and physically challenging as training and support staff work to accommodate larger class sizes and the overall number of students on campus.

Summary

To say that 2020 was a busy year at the MLEA would be an understatement. Staff conducted 13 basic training programs totaling 2,800 hours in training 1,027 public safety students while navigating the developing COVID-19 pandemic and renovations to dorm buildings, offices, and the cafeteria. Both created unique training challenges that tested the staff's agility, problem solving skills, and commitment to each other and the students they worked so tirelessly to prepare for duty. Training staff performed exceedingly well in managing multiple schedules while conducting outstanding training and caring for students.

The Academy has become a place known for its beautiful location and great training facilities. Although COVID-19 suspended most activities that normally occur over the year, 2021 will no doubt bring some of those back to the Academy as we continue to improve the MLEA facilities that enhance the agency's ability to provide a cost-effective training venue where relevant and realistic training can occur for Montana's public safety community.



Students fishing on the MLEA campus after class.

Special thanks to Training Officer David Ortley for providing the majority of the photos.